

Renate Geerlings

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From: Renate Geerlings
Sent: Wednesday, November 11, 2009 2:29 PM
To: Susan Mermelstein; 'letters@nytimes.com'
Cc: andreak@nytimes.com
Subject: Letter Fr: Qubad Talabani re: "Minorities in Iraq's North Seen as Threatened"

Hello,
In response to Sam Dagher's article of today entitled "Minorities in Iraq's North Seen as Threatened," please find below a letter to the Editor written by Qubad Talabani who is the Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government to the United States.

Thank you in advance for considering this letter. If you have any questions, please let me know.

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Mr. Talabani's contact information is:

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To the Editor

Your Nov. 11 article "Minorities in Iraq's North Seen as Threatened" by Sam Dagher completely neglected efforts by the Kurdistan Regional Government to protect minorities and inaccurately portrays a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report as vilifying the authorities of the Kurdistan Region. HRW in fact blames Sunni Arab extremists for atrocities in the city of Nineveh [Iraq's north]— which the KRG does not even control.

As an oppressed community, the people of the Kurdistan Region insist on tolerance and peaceful coexistence in our Region and throughout Iraq. Minorities, regardless of their ethnic and religious background, have come to the Kurdistan Region, fleeing violence and persecution. If the minorities in Nineveh were being systematically intimidated by the Kurds, why would so many seek shelter in KRG-administered land?

The problem is that terrorists and extremists are intent on destabilizing the situation in Iraq's disputed territories. The way forward in Nineveh, as with other conflicted areas in Iraq, is to implement Article 140 of Iraq's federal constitution. Only then will we resolve the administration, security and economic development issues facing the inhabitants of these territories. Until then, coordination is required between the U.S., KRG and the federal government of Iraq to establish robust security mechanisms for the safety of all people.

Qubad Talabani
Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government to the United States

FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE

Turkish officials make historic visit to Erbil *New Consulate Underscores Pledges of Cooperation*

Washington [October 30, 2009] - Turkey will open a diplomatic consulate in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), as part of the increased political and economic cooperation between the longtime neighbors.

The future consulate was announced by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu, who visited the KRI on Friday as part of Ankara's efforts to end a conflict with Kurdish rebels based across its southern border. Davutoglu's visit to Erbil was the first by a Turkish minister to the Kurdistan region and he said he felt right at home.

"It's high time for everyone to take bold steps," Davutoglu said. "Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis, we will all together rebuild the Middle East."

Davutoglu was joined by Turkish Trade Minister Zafer Caglayan and a delegation of around 70 officials and businessmen, who were met at Erbil International Airport by the Kurdistan Regional Government's Prime Minister Barham Salih and Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari.

Turkish businesses already overwhelmingly account for the number of new investors in the KRI since the region was liberated in 2003. To highlight the growing ties, Turkey announced it would open two new border crossings with Iraq.

Turkish-Iraqi ties have gathered steam since the two nations formed a joint committee with the United States in November 2008 to discuss and act upon joint security issues. The committee meets every two months to exchange intelligence and to coordinate security measures against cross-border attacks and related concerns.

Masoud Barzani, the president of the KRI, hosted a dinner for the Turkish delegation and praised their visit. "The decision to open a consulate general in Erbil is an extremely positive development for the region," President Barzani said. "Turkey's role is important for the future of the region and the future growth of economic ties. The region of Kurdistan plays the role of a bridge for Iraq as this region is one with stability."

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*** MEDIA ADVISORY ***

Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq Representative to the U.S., Qubad Talabani, Addresses Rhodes College

WHAT: Qubad Talabani, Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq Representative to the United States, and the son of Iraq's president, Jalal Talabani, will visit Rhodes College on November 18, 2009 at 7:00pm to deliver a lecture entitled "Iraq: As US Forces Stand Down, Who is Standing Up" to discuss how to ensure that sacrifices made by Americans in Iraq will lead to a democratic and stable country.

WHO: Qubad Talabani, Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government
- Iraq
David Romano, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of International Studies, Rhodes College

WHERE: Rhodes College
Buckman Hall
2000 North Parkway, Memphis, 38122

WHEN: 7:00pm, November 18, 2009

About Qubad Talabani:

As Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq to the United States, Qubad Talabani works closely with the U.S. Government and research institutions to provide critical analysis and up-to-date information on Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. After Operation Iraqi Freedom (Spring 2003), he served a year as Senior Foreign Relations officer for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), operating mainly out of Baghdad and Sulaimania. From 2001 - 2003, Mr. Talabani served as Special Assistant and as Deputy PUK Representative to the PUK Representative in Washington, DC. Mr. Talabani makes frequent media appearances on major networks including: CNN, BBC, FOX News, and other American and international networks. Mr. Talabani's family has been involved in Kurdish politics for decades. His father, Jalal Talabani, is the President of the Republic of Iraq and Secretary General of the PUK.

About the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq:

The Kurdistan Region is a federal recognized autonomous region in Iraq. With a population of currently around 4 million and rapidly increasing, the three governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Suleimania cover approximately 40,000 square kilometers. The Kurdistan Region is considered to be the safest, most stable Region in Iraq, and it is host to an ever expanding number of commercial and trade initiatives.

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PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Renate Geerlings
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Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq Representative to the U.S.**Addresses Rhodes College in Memphis***Qubad Talabani Discusses Future of Iraq as American Troops Depart*

MEMPHIS, Tenn. 20 November, 2009 -- Wednesday night, November 18, in a speech to Rhodes College, Qubad Talabani, the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG) Representative to the United States, and the son of Iraq's president, Jalal Talabani, delivered a lecture entitled "Iraq: As U.S. Forces Stand Down, Who is Standing Up." Mr. Talabani discussed how to ensure that sacrifices made by Americans in Iraq will lead to a democratic and stable country.

"Who is standing up [in Iraq]?" asked Mr. Talabani. "We in the Kurdistan Region are. We are capable to lead Iraq to a new era, as we have proven. We overcame our internal conflicts to establish a Regional government that united the warring political parties. We have worked hard to secure our area from the scourge of terrorism and extremism. We are proud today that not one American has been killed, injured in combat or kidnapped in the Kurdistan Region."

As Representative of the KRG to the United States, Mr. Talabani works closely with the U.S. Government and research institutions to provide critical analysis and up-to-date information on Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. Talabani's family has been involved in Kurdistan politics for decades.

One of the most notable achievements in the Kurdistan Region came this past July when there was a historic set of elections for the Region's president and Parliament, which were hailed by international organizations and observers as free and fair.

"The Kurdistan Region showed the rest of Iraq and the world what we all knew: that we know how to take strong steps to make our country better—that we know how to stand up for democracy," Mr. Talabani said.

Mr. Talabani, who was invited to Rhodes College by David Romano, Assistant Professor of the Department of International Studies, also addressed the pro-business environment that is taking hold in the Kurdistan Region.

"Our market oriented policies and visions have turned the Kurdistan Region into an attractive investment environment," said Mr. Talabani. "We are working on a robust transparency and good governance strategy, which will give us the tools to combat corruption and improve and make more transparent, our procurement and tendering procedures, while streamlining our bureaucracy," Mr. Talabani added.

As the Kurdistan Region works to build a strong foundation of democracy and capitalism, the area has begun to repair old divisions. "The Kurdistan region has worked hard with Turkey to improve upon our already strong economic relations to build stronger political and security relations."

"While Iraqis of all walks of life have stood up to overcome the gravest of challenges, including terrorism, sectarian violence, political stalemates and regional interference, we remain well aware that in order for the U.S. to stand down, and Iraqis to stand up, in a sustainable and viable federal democracy, continued U.S. engagement, and more importantly, continued U.S. interest in Iraq is paramount," said Mr. Talabani.

About the Kurdistan Region

The Kurdistan Region is a federal recognized autonomous region in Iraq. With a population of currently around 4 million and rapidly increasing, the three governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaimania cover approximately 25,000 square miles. The Kurdistan Region is considered to be the safest, most stable Region in Iraq, and it is host to an ever expanding number of commercial and trade initiatives.

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